

A Guide to the Radford (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1891-1940 (Bulk 1891-1910)

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History

Processed by: T. Harter, E. Woodward

Title Statement

A Guide to the Radford (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1891-1940 (Bulk 1891-1910)

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Descriptive Summary

Collection Number

Accession number 50446

Language

English

Collector

Radford (Va.) Circuit Court

Physical Characteristics

Digital images; 9.9 cubic feet (22 boxes)

Location

Library of Virginia

Repository

The Library of Virginia

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Chancery Causes 1891-1910 use digital images found electronically on the [Chancery Records Index](#) available on the website of the Library of Virginia.

Chancery Causes 1913-1940 are unprocessed. Contact Archives Research Services for availability.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

These materials came to the Library of Virginia in transfer of court papers from the City of Radford in June 2012 under accession 50446.

Processing Information

Digital images for Chancery Causes, 1891-1910 were generated by Backstage Library Works through the Library of Virginia's Circuit Court Records Preservation Program in 2025 and 2026.

Radford (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1891-1910 were processed by E. Woodward and T. Harter 2024-2025. At this time, there are no plans to process and index the 1913-1940 chancery causes.

Encoded by V. Brooks: 2026

Preferred Citation

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Historical Information

Context for Records: Chancery Causes are cases of equity. According to Black's Law Dictionary they are "administered according to fairness as contrasted with the strictly formulated rules of common law." A judge, not a jury, determines the outcome of the case; however, the judge is basing the decision on findings compiled and documented by Commissioners. Chancery causes are useful when researching local history, genealogical information, and land or estate divisions. They are a valuable source of local, state, social, and legal history and serve as a primary source for understanding a locality's history. Chancery causes document the lived experiences of free and enslaved individuals; women; children; people living with physical disabilities or mental health struggles; people living in poverty; defunct institutions and corporate entities; or those that may not have otherwise left traditional written histories.

Locality History: Radford, in Montgomery County, was formerly known as Lovely Mount, English Ferry, Ingles's Ferry, Central Depot, and Central City. The town of Central City was established in 1885 and incorporated as a town in 1887. Its name changed to Radford in 1890 to honor John Blair Radford, a prominent local citizen, and it was incorporated as a city in 1892.

Scope and Content

Radford (Va.) Chancery Causes, 1891-1940, consist of cases concerning issues of equity brought largely by residents of Radford and filed in the corporation court. These cases often involve the following actions: divisions of estates or land, disputes over wills, disputes regarding contracts, debt, divorce, and business disagreements. Predominant documents found in these chancery causes include bills (documents the plaintiff's complaint), answers (defendant's response to the plaintiff's complaint), decrees (court's decision), depositions, affidavits, correspondence, lists of heirs, deeds, plats, wills, business records or vital statistics.

Chancery Causes, 1891-1910, primarily consist of debt cases, contract disputes, and divorce suits. Some of the chancery causes began in other localities, including Bristol City, Bland County, Tazewell County, Montgomery County, and Pulaski County and Mercer County and McDowell County, West Virginia, before moving to Radford.

Chancery Causes 1913-1940 are at this time unprocessed so have no descriptive information.

Arrangement

Organized by case, of which each is assigned a unique index number comprised of the latest year found in case and a sequentially increasing 3-digit number assigned by the processor as cases for that year are found. Arranged chronologically.

Arrangement of documents within each folder are as follows: Bill, Answer, and Final Decree (if found).

Selected Suits of Interest

Causes of Interest are identified by local records archivists during processing and indexing. These causes are generally selected based upon guiding principles of having historical, genealogical or sensational significance; however, determining what is "of interest" is subjective, and the individual perspective and experience of the describing archivist will affect the material identified.

1893-006: Thomas Mulcare and wife vs. Thomas H. Walker, etc.:

Scope and Content

Debt suit regarding purchase of town lot in Radford, whereby complainant mentions land speculation and possible fraud on the part of the defendant. The defendant's answer also mentions that: "long prior to...1891...the boom at Radford had collapsed and there was no demand for lots whatever, and even if complainant purchased for speculation alone as he alleges, he should not involve the aid of a court of equity to reimburse him for a loss at gambling."

1894-003: J.M. French etc. for etc. vs. J.W. Thorn, etc.:

Scope and Content

Debt suit involving several suits originating in Bland County, one of which is Alfred Carter vs. Admr. William M. Bird, in which Alfred's brother Russell Carter had been arrested in Bland County in 1874-1875 on charges of harboring a girl ostensibly abducted for "concubinage." Bond and surety for bond to retain attorneys French & Muncy ostensibly at issue. The Carters were Black and the Bland County bill alleges that the Carters would be "swindled out of their little homes by the ___ of the said injunction suit."

1894-006: G.S. Baskerville etc. Vs. West Radford Land & Improvement Co] etc.:

Scope and Content

Debt suit. Answer references land speculation of properties along railroad routes.

1895-008: William H. McCormick vs. E.W. Peck etc.:

Scope and Content

Contract dispute. Suit contains architectural drawings, floor plans and elevations, for a two-story residence.

1896-009: Lewis Harvey vs. Asgn(s) of American Bridge & Iron Co.:

Scope and Content

Contract dispute. The City of Radford contracted with American Bridge & Iron Co. to build a bridge over Connelly's Run in the city. Suit includes agreements, contracts, and correspondence.

1910-001: Mrs. Laura B. McHarg vs. Henry K. McHarg, Jr.:

Scope and Content

Divorce suit. Defendant's adultery had been proven, and complainant sought and won divorce with alimony of \$3,600/year on condition she resume her maiden name. Contract/agreement between father in law and complainant in which he specifically agreed to fund this alimony for the rest of the complainant's life if his son should fail to do so or died before she did, and further directed in his will to fund this if he himself died and his son failed to pay. Also includes about 40 letters regarding details of the case and the complainant's plight. McHarg Sr. was president of the Detroit and Mackinac Railway Company and a director of the Virginia Iron, Coal and Coke Company. Prominent NY family.